Absent Fathers and Italian Nation-building in Carlo Collodi's Books for School

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Abstract:

In this contribution, I analyse the schoolbooks of Carlo Collodi (born Carlo Lorenzini, 1826-1890), written between 1877 and 1890. In those years, the recently formed Italian State – declared in 1861 and completed in 1871 with the annexation of Rome – faced the necessity of constructing a shared national identity for a heterogeneous community. I examine how the representation of paternal figures is informed by Collodi's pedagogical approach in his schoolbooks. Within the Italian nation-building, which had cultural and ideological nuances, the family was considered essential, and the *padre* played an undisputed authoritarian role. However, my analysis demonstrates how Collodi's schoolbooks subvert that ideology through representing the dysfunctional paternal figure.

Keywords: Collodi, Italian Identity, Nation-building, 19th Century, Pinocchio

Carlo Lorenzini, widely known as Collodi (1826-1890), is well-known in classic European children's literature for his classic *Le avventure di Pinocchio,* whose first episode was published in 1883 in the magazine *Il giornale per i bambini*. But he also wrote many schoolbooks, mostly centred around the young middle-class child Giannettino and his path towards a conservative education led by his mentor Dottor Boccadoro. The first text, *Giannettino*, published in 1877, was named after Parravicini's *Giannetto*, the most popular schoolbook at the time. *Giannettino* was followed by *La grammatica di Giannettino* (1883), *L'abbaco di Giannettino* (1884), *La geografia di Giannettino* (1886), and *Il viaggio per l'Italia di Giannettino* (1880, 1883, 1886), a volume made up of three books dedicated to tales of Giannettino's travels throughout Italy's North, Centre, and South. *La lanterna magica di Giannettino,* in 1890, concluded the collection. Furthermore, Collodi wrote other texts for school use, such as *Minuzzolo* (1878) or *Libro di lezioni per la seconda classe elementare, secondo gli ultimi programmi* (1885).

This article analyses Collodi's schoolbooks, examining how the representation of paternal figures is informed by the author's pedagogical approach in these works published 1877-1890. In those years, the recently formed Italian State – declared in 1861 and completed in 1871 with the annexation of Rome – faced the necessity of constructing a shared national identity for a heterogeneous community. Within that cultural-ideological process, the family was considered

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essential, and the *padre* played an undisputed authoritarian role. However, my analysis demonstrates how Collodi's schoolbooks subvert that ideology through representing the dysfunctional paternal figure.

Before reaching even wider popularity with his books for children, Collodi was also considered to be one of the most authoritative journalists and was certainly amongst the most caustic ones, as argued by Vincenzo Cappelletti, Cosimo Ceccuti and Daniela Marcheschi, who claim that "La Firenze dei giornali e dei giornalisti è per tanta parte la Firenze di Collodi" (2011, 33). In addition, the King of Italy Umberto I granted Collodi a Knighthood in 1878. This title, apparently, was conferred because of the success he had with *Giannettino*, published the year before (Prada 2018, 313). Thus, by the beginning of the 1880s, Collodi was, without doubt, an authority amongst the Italian cultural élite. Moreover, his reputation as a journalist led him to be a celebrity before beginning his career as a writer for children.

This article contributes to a recent scholarly re-assessment of Collodi's work and its participation in the Italian nation-building process. The schoolbooks have historically earned Collodi a reputation as a conservative writer, but I investigate the extent to which Collodi's schoolbooks subvert the strategies propounded by the Italian State. Most of the 20th century critical debate – and part of more recent criticism – viewed the wooden puppet Pinocchio, who defeated poverty thanks to hard work and commitment, as an archetype for the Italian bourgeoisie (Spadolini 1989 [1972], 243). In recent years, Daniela Marcheschi (2016) – head of the commission for Collodi's *Edizione Nazionale* – re-examined Collodi's masterpiece *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (1883) and questioned its limited reputation as the Italian-bourgeois *Bildungsroman*. Marcheschi, instead, discovered in the novel elements that dissent from the values promoted by the Italian State in its attempt to construct a shared national identity. Marcheschi demonstrated how values prized by the Italian State – loyalty, respect for, and identification with the official authority, the promotion of a stable middle-class – seemed to be subverted in *Pinocchio*. Marcheschi affirms the claimed influence of Collodi-as-journalist on Collodi-as-children's-writer and believes irony to be as prominent a feature in the work of the children's writer as it was for the journalist (2016, 30). As a result, *Pinocchio* and its author are now linked with progressive and anti-establishment positions. Marcheschi argues:

> Pinocchio non sarà mai conformista, come molti vorrebbero invece che fosse, per annullarne la carica esplosiva. [...] Ed è questo che Collodi vuol dire ai bambini e ai grandi: rimanete sempre Pinocchio, non diventate conformisti! (Ivi, 19)

However, this reconfigured, politicized analysis of *Pinocchio* has not yet been expanded to consideration of Collodi's schoolbooks. These texts are still perceived as books written to facilitate the Italian State's cultural and political strategies. Pino Boero and Carmine De Luca did note how *Giannettino* represented "il primo caso di scardinamento del sistema ideologico che sacrifica l'infanzia all'altare della morale borghese" (2010, 23). The critics cited scholars such as Luigi Santucci, who already in 1950 highlighted Collodi's innovative contribution

to destabilizing the "solidissimo edificio" (77) of the Italian bourgeoisie. Santucci argued that *Giannettino* displayed preference for the "morale taumaturgica della fantasia" (*ibidem*) over the pedagogical seriousness that characterized other contemporaneous schoolbooks. Boero and De Luca, however, did not investigate the potential political and social nuances in these educational texts and confined their claims about *Giannettino*'s innovation to its stylistic features. In recent years, scholars such as Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani have still claimed these texts to be supportive of the cultural and political strategy promoted by the Italian State; they identify in *Giannettino* an "ideale educativo chiaramente ispirato al sistema di valori, ai modelli di comportamento e ai costumi civili della borghesia urbana" (2018, 126).

1. Fatherhood and Italian identity

Historians such as Ilaria Porciani (2006) and Alberto Mario Banti (2000, 2011) argue that, in the years of Collodi's publication, the first decades that followed the Italian State's unification emphasized the concept of *Risorgimento* and the claimed pivotal role of the family in Italian society. The conflict between the two authorities of the time (the secular Italian State and the Holy See) was a political-cultural debate known as the *Questione Romana*, and both institutions clamoured to become the supreme authority, so it is no surprise that they tried to link the family to their propaganda. For example, Pope Leo XIII inaugurated his pontificate in 1878 by promoting Catholic familial education for a Catholic society with the encyclical *Inscrutabili Dei Consilio*. At the same time, the Italian government propagandized a familial image of the Italian nation, in which the *patrioti* and their relatives loved their motherland as if it were their natural family. Regardless of the perspective, the family was an accepted authority within Italian society, the fulcrum around which the institutions aimed to bond their loyal community. As cultural scholars like Marzio Barbagli (1984) and Piero Melograni (1988) argued, authoritarian social constructs of the family had been modelled in Italian society since at least the 15th century. The familial construct was well-rooted in the Italian community, which explains the substantial use of family-related semantics in secular and religious propaganda.

Back to the post-unification years, the paternal figure was an acknowledged familial authority in post-unification Italian society. The *padre* was the firm educator, the ultimate figure who demanded obedience, and the one who had to provide for the whole family's financial needs. He was the role model to be followed, the herald of wisdom and justice: "il capo della famiglia e rappresenta Iddio" as Giulio Tarra (1864, 194-196) defined him. Unlike the mother, the father's strength resided in his being a person with no sentimentalism. Scholars such as Pietro Costa went as far as defining the paternal figure as the nucleus of the family; according to Costa, the family is a "luogo dove una molteplicità di figure soggettive esistono in rapporto con la dominante figura del pater" (2001 [1999], 364).

The *padre* was publicly and legally acknowledged as the titleholder of the familial community. His relevance within the family – exemplified by the family name, which still applies today – was the logical consequence of a paternalistic society based on ideals that were considered "masculine" at that time: detachment, vigour, objectivity, and pragmatism. Italian society was still a predominantly masculinist community after unification; while the evidence is abundant, suffice to say that in those years – and until 1946 – men politically controlled Italian society, as women could not vote or participate in political life. Moreover, as in many other countries, Italian women's salaries were generally lower than their male counterparts; for example, a *maestra* (primary school teacher), earned considerably less than her male colleague *maestro* (Ghizzoni 2003, 35).

The cold war between the secular State and Catholic Church was instantiated in their conflicting emphasis on the two terms in the man-father and woman-mother dichotomy. The post-unification Italian State promoted the *padre*'s authoritative presence and solidity for its political propaganda, superimposing a paternal figure over the maternal image of *Madre Patria*, or *Donna Italia*; the fundamental archetype that the secular propaganda promoted as the highest patriotic symbol was the one of the *padre della patria* (De Fort 1996, 33). Conversely, the Catholic Church promoted itself as a maternal, reassuring, and uninterested authority, the "nutrice, maestra e madre", Pope Leo XIII puts it in *Inscrutabili Dei Consilio*. Such a distinction does not intend to oversimplify a rivalry spanning the first decades following Italian unification. However, the Italian State created a propagandistic narrative through which it predominantly promoted itself as a decisive and masculine authority, and the Catholic Church adopted a reassuring approach by a substantial use of the Marian iconography.

While the Holy See focused on a maternal and private relationship with the faithful, the Italian State aimed to superimpose a masculine and authoritarian public image. Cesare Correnti's speech for King Vittorio Emanuele II's funeral in 1878 stresses the Italian State's aim to be perceived as a familial community under the *pater*'s command. The Italian nation, simultaneously described as mother and daughter, was under the paternal command of the King: "Italia / con orgoglio di madre / con dolore di figlia / implora / al re liberatore / che fu cittadino fedele e capitano vittorioso / l'immortalità / dei giusti e degli eroi" (in Tobia 1998, 22). The shift from private to public is here clearly expressed: the King (and hence the State) was the father of the whole community and needed to be respected, obeyed, and somewhat feared by his subjects.

The newborn Italian State championed a masculine image of itself and identified the *padre* figure as the supreme authority. In those years, Minister of Education Guido Baccelli was on the frontline in promoting the image of a secular paternal State in which masculinity was encouraged and endorsed through the introduction of military gymnastics in schools. In a speech he made at Parliament on 17 November 1881, Baccelli aimed at a society comprised of "cittadini utili a sé e difensori disciplinati, coraggiosi e robusti al paese" (in "Istituzione della scuola popolare di complemento all'istruzione obbligatoria", n.240). He believed that the emotional instability and the lack of determination of the citi-

zenry facilitated the success of Catholic propaganda in the rivalry between State and Church, demonstrating how the conflict was understood as a gendered issue. State propaganda considered emotional stability a masculine strength, so the Italian government discouraged frivolousness and any sign of feminine weakness in primary school books including *Giannettino*, which for this reason was not approved by the school commission in 1883: "han pregi molti di sostanza e di dettato, ma sono concepiti in modo così romanzesco, da dar soverchio luogo al dolce, distraendo dall'utile; e sono scritti in stile così gaio, e non di rado così umoristicamente frivolo, da togliere ogni serietà all'insegnamento" (Boero, De Luca 2010, 22).

However, scholars such as Marco Cavina (2007) have argued that, in the second half of the *Ottocento* (1800s), the supreme authority of the father figure began to falter in Italy and in the wider Western world. According to Cavina, the dissolution of the *patria potestà* was the result of a historical process ignited by the French Revolution, and which was completed by the end of the 1970s. Cavina argues that factors such as "individualismo borghese, industrializzazione, statalismo, trasformazione del mercato del lavoro e della costruzione del genere" (vii) contributed to terminate what had been a dogmatic authority up until then. Cavina also argues that the promulgation of the *Codice civile unitario* in 1865 de facto divested the *pater familias* of his supreme power, that of disinheriting his offsprings: "Col venir meno del potere di diseredare si offuscava definitivamente la configurazione 'regale' del padre di famiglia, privo ormai della possibilità d'investitura del proprio successore. Il re della casa stava per essere definitivamente spodestato" (ivi, 244). Hence, the Italian State was dismissing the *pater*'s private authority through laws such as the *Codice civile unitario*, while promoting a public paternal image of authority.

Responding to this public discourse, Collodi presents to Italian children a depleted paternal figure, whose weak authority is sometimes ridiculed. Almost all of Collodi's mostly-upper-class fictional fathers seem to lack authority and never be role models to their children. Giannettino's father is the most obvious example, because he is the only male character in all Collodi's schoolbooks whose name is unknown. His anonymity creates a narrative uniqueness, a kind of linguistic scarcity that I argue could represent one of the social problems Collodi's criticised strongly in his journalism: the scarce sense of responsibility for public duties. Giannettino's father is the blend of the two images of father and State in one negative and anonymous character who embodies his society's greatest evils. The only positive paternal models in such otherwise negative representations are Minuzzolo's father Quintiliano and Giannettino's uncle Ferrante. Their authority is based on concrete education and not on natural law: Collodi critiques the mainstream assertion of the paternal figure.

2. The *padre* in schoolbooks

In Collodi's schoolbooks, most paternal characters epitomise the problematic aspects of Italian society that Collodi depicted in many of his journalistic

texts, such as insufficient attention to children's education, carelessness of the public community, and financial parasitism. What stands out is Collodi's choice of Giannettino's father as the archetype of the politicians' absenteeism. In his journalistic works, Collodi often harshly criticised such moral failure as one of the worst perils of organised modern society. Short stories such as "L'onorevole Cenè Tanti" (in *Occhi e nasi* [1881]), "Funerali e danze" (in *Opere* 2006), "Il trovarobe ministeriale", or "Una seduta notturna" (in *Note gaie* 1893) are just some of the numerous occasions in which Collodi condemned the absenteeism of politicians. Giannettino's father is represented as a wrong educational model. His absenteeism from parliamentary duties highlights his failing as a citizen and as a role model to his son. The education of Giannettino is not under the direction of his father – as happens, for example, with Minuzzolo's father Quintiliano – but in the hands of uncle Ferrante and Dottor Boccadoro, who are not part of the primary family nucleus. Ferrante is the uncle, but his being a sailor allows him to visit Giannettino only sporadically, while Boccadoro is Giannettino's father's old friend who becomes the child's mentor.

In De Amicis' *Cuore*, he used the terms *padre* 425 times and *babbo* 18 times: I argue that he was constructing a kind of linguistic sacredness to the paternal characters. And in *Cuore*, Enrico's father and mother are active characters. Conversely, in all Collodi's schoolbooks, *padre* is used 80 times, and *babbo* 92 times. The prevalence of the word *babbo* needs to be understood through Collodi's Tuscan background. Unlike in De Amicis' *Cuore*, Collodi's books have no fictional mother or father as a main character, which diminishes the importance of those direct familial figures. By not creating any relevant parental character, Collodi makes the extensive absence of the familial authority even more explicit. Such a hiatus highlights a criticism directed against the lack of role models in the society at the time, both in social and professional contexts.

While Collodi's society was promoting the father as its idealised image, Collodi seems to invite the reader to reflect on how distant the actual society is from the propagandised one, critiquing the paternal role's propagandised interpretation. In his schoolbooks, lower-class fathers teach positive values to their children of productiveness and honesty, although their lack of education is depicted as causing their submission to strict social hierarchy. As for bourgeois and aristocratic fathers, Giannettino's and Giocondo's fathers are portrayed negatively, and only the bourgeois father of Giannettino's friend Minuzzolo, Quintiliano is described wholly positively, which I argue is a further critique of upper-class masculinity and their lack of cultural depth.

3. Giannettino's father: the story of an absentee

In the Giannettino schoolbooks, Giannettino's father went to university with his son's mentor, Dottor Boccadoro, and has friends in other parts of Italy, such as Sardinia and Piedmont, most likely due to his job as a parliamentary deputy. In the whole collection, there is no clear information regarding the father's occupation. He is described as an upper-class man, most likely a bourgeois,

through the fictional voice of Giannettino, and it is said that his father owns a marble portrait of himself. Although it is not explicitly stated, it might be supposed that he holds a ministry or is at least a very highly-rated person, as marble busts denoted a high social class.

Regarding his relationship with his son, Collodi only states "il suo babbo gli voleva un ben dell'anima" (1877, 9). Despite such proclaimed affection, Giannettino's father puts his son's education in the hands of a friend, Dottor Boccadoro. The father interacts with his son only twice in the whole collection, both times in the first volume, *Giannettino*. In the first instance, he questions Giannettino about his watch. Later in the story, Giannettino is leaving with Dottor Boccadoro for the *viaggio* through Italy: Giannettino's father commands his son to obey his mentor. In these episodes, the significance of the paternal character is low, however, his authority is never explicitly ridiculed, as Collodi did with his more strident journalism.

Collodi elides any physical description for this character, and even the name. These devices contribute to the father being characterized by his absence, right down to his failure to attend parliamentary sessions. Collodi decides to use Dottor Boccadoro to reprove Giannettino's father in front of the child:

> […] io vedo il babbo che ogni volta che c'è da fare il deputato, piglia le sue brave carabattole e va sul Monte Amiata, com'egli dice, a cercar radiche medicinali. -Tuo padre, che in tutto il resto vale oro quanto pesa, in questo caso non è punto lodevole: perché oltre a dare il cattivo esempio al figliuolo, non solo danneggia i suoi propri interessi, ma pregiudica in certo modo anche quelli di tutto il paese. (Ivi, 123-124)

The unappealing parental profiles Collodi presents in his writings speak to a critique of the élites and their contradictions: portraying upper-class men as consistently unconstructive characters, Collodi reveals how the new society is based on propagandistic ideals that are not reflected in the reality. The protagonist of his schoolbooks – hence the model for children to follow – receives no attention from parents who embody no positive attributes, neither in the privacy of the family nor in society. Ultimately, the élites' hypocrisies are unveiled for recognition by Collodi's readers.

4. The selected community

Irony is a distinctive feature of Collodi's writings. But irony is one of the most elusive concepts to define in literary studies. Wayne Booth addresses this problem when he ironically thanks eleven contributors for their 748 interpretations of irony in the introduction to *The Rhetoric of Irony*. Scholars such as Booth and Sue Walsh have approached the notion of irony through its relationship with community, dynamism and authority.

Booth's argument is that irony creates intimacy between the actors of communication. Booth described a "selected community" made up of those who share a common understanding by "getting" (1974, 10-12) the irony. According-

ing to Booth, this type of community is formed by a dynamic process of reconstruction involves four steps that allow the audience to understand the ironist. Firstly, the audience needs to reject the surface-level meaning, then look for alternative interpretations. Then the audience needs to determine the author's beliefs; and identify the underlying meaning. Booth argues that what Wolfgang Iser named the implied author creates a path for the audience to follow. This process allows the two actors to depart from the first shaky platform of superficial and ambiguous meaning "toward an obscured point that is intended as wiser, wittier, more compassionate, subtler, truer, more moral, or at least less [...] vulnerable to further irony" (ivi, 36).

Sue Walsh accepts such dynamism and claims that the semantic process could not be initiated if the "selected community" did not possess the proper tools to distinguish irony from a mere statement, and that is how irony is linked to authority. Walsh sees in authority the medium that guides the audience through the process of reconstruction and states "what exactly *'the'* point is" (2016, 97). She argues that authority allows the reader to "privilege a particular reading, [...] the reading of the 'meant' " (ivi, 97-98). Paraphrasing Booth and Walsh, we might link the author's system of beliefs to an established idea of authority, which will guide the "selected community" towards the intended meaning.

As Collodi was known for his witty use of irony, I will examine irony in the representation of these two strategic characters Boccadoro and Ferrante to discern Collodi's attitude towards education.

5. Two non-biological paternal figures: Ferrante and Boccadoro

Booth, in his theorization of irony, argues that the device functions by creating two levels of address: the superficial meaning addressed to the naïve reader, and the more sophisticated meaning addressed to the knowing reader, what Booth calls the "selected community". In *Giannettino,* Collodi fills the educational and parental gap left by Giannettino's father with Doctor Boccadoro and Giannettino's uncle Ferrante, and these two characters Boccadoro and Ferrante represent the two audiences of the device of irony. Boccadoro (meaning "mouth of gold") personifies superficial understanding and the uncontested acceptance of the middle-class behavioural code and its mainstream societal values. On the other hand, uncle Ferrante (recalling *ferro,* iron) personifies Booth's "selected community", through which the author conveys his ironized critique. These two characters epitomise the distinction between private and public authority; while Ferrante belongs to the family, being the brother of Giannettino's mother, Boccadoro is not related to the child, though he acts as a counterpart of the father and the teacher. Moreover, whereas Ferrante embodies the satisfaction of the self, and lectures his nephew on personal achievement with a hint of the "self-made man" principle, Boccadoro personifies the impositions of middle-class society with its vetoes and rigid etiquette. At the same time, he represents the ambiguity and hypocrisy of the ruling class, as some of his conduct contradicts the values he often imposes on Giannettino.

There is historical evidence that Collodi had probably read English positivist books such as Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, a manifesto of mid-Victorian liberalism. Recognizing this influence might allow us to identify in Ferrante a symbol of the positivist refusal of unchallenged truths. Irony has been described as "the condition of language [that] refuses the petrification of meaning" (Walsh 2016, 107): Ferrante shares the positivist refusal of any given truth, and his lectures focus on deep understanding and the individual's experience, which populates his ironic and positivist attitude.

6. Boccadoro, the "mouth-of-gold"

The following analysis on the character of Boccadoro shows that Giannettino's mentor, unlike Ferrante, seems to focus on superficial meaning, and his dogmatic approach distances him from Positivism. Collodi ironically constructs Dottor Boccadoro and through him criticizes the bourgeois dogmatic approach to education. Boccadoro, as a pledge of friendship, offers to take charge of the child's education and become his mentor. Collodi describes Boccadoro as extremely thin and sincere, in opposition to Ferrante's solidity: "un bel vecchietto asciutto e nervoso, lindo negli abiti e nella persona, il quale era conosciutissimo per la sua bella virtù di parlar chiaro e di dire a tutti la verità, anche a costo di passare qualche volta per un po' troppo lesto di lingua" (1877, 4) Boccadoro aims to purge the immature habits from Giannettino through many prohibitions imposed like a sort of oracle. For the implied author, this is the path towards meeting the social requirements for bourgeois society. Boccadoro promotes a code of behaviour based on a – vague – sense of hierarchy: "Quando ti trovi in compagnia con gente da più di te cerca di parlar poco: di non interrompere i discorsi degli altri, e di non metter bocca nelle cose, delle quali non t'intendi" (ivi, 13).

Applying Booth's theorization of irony as a dynamic process of constructing meaning, I argue that Boccadoro epitomizes the unquestioning audience of superficial meaning. Boccadoro constantly lectures Giannettino with unchallenged truths. His educational method is based on a long list of vetoes grouped in the section titled "Non mangiarti le unghie: non grattarti il capo" (ivi, 10). As a sample of his teaching method, the title is only a part of the long list of injunctions.

The upright Boccadoro, however, does not always abide by his own moral values. This fact is demonstrated, for instance, in the episode where Giannettino is arrested for stealing in a restaurant. Boccadoro and Giannettino's mother appear on the scene when the police are taking the child into custody. Boccadoro intervenes by misusing his authoritative position, intimidating the police by informing them of the family's high-ranking social standing. Giannettino's mother pulls her son into the carriage, which quickly departs. Collodi ironically highlights the gap between Boccadoro's professed maxims and his behaviour, and depicts him and Giannettino as above the law: "La signora Sofia strappò il ragazzo dalle mani del carabiniere e lo portò quasi di peso in carrozza. Il carabiniere voleva protestare; ma il dottor Boccadoro, affacciatosi allo sportello gli dette il suo nome: e la carrozza, voltando indietro, ripartì a rotta di collo" (ivi, 189).

Collodi's decision to give Giannettino's mentor the nickname of *Boccadoro* is also a device of irony. If we assume that the name *Boccadoro* (mouth-of-gold) refers to someone whose words are always true and fair such a choice would be an anomaly in Collodi's nicknames. The nickname of *Boccadoro* was the epithet used for Giovanni Crisostomo, patriarch of Constantinople in the 4th century. His name Crisostomo, derived from Greek words *chrysós* (gold) and *stóma* (mouth), highlighted his outstanding eloquence. According to Garzanti Italian dictionary, the nickname *Boccadoro* can ironically be used to identify someone pedantic. The latter seems to be a more coherent reading of Collodi's choice.

Collodi used nicknames in many of his works, often accompanied by the real name, enhancing a character's disadvantage or negative features. For instance, in *Pinocchio*, with *Mastro Ciliegia* (Antonio), Collodi highlights his alcoholic's red nose, while *Polendina* (Geppetto) implies the vanity of wearing a wig. This is ironic again; he is so poor that he paints the fireplace on the wall but manages to wear a wig. In *Giannettino*'s chapter "I soprannomi, Giannettino" cruelly uses nicknames to embellish his classmates' weaknesses. For instance, he calls a student with a hunchback *Gobbino*, a child who limps *Zoppo Vulcano*, and a child who wears skimpy clothes because of his poverty *Maestro Miseria*, and a child who suffers from a disease that makes him extremely weak and pale, *Ricotta* (1877, 45-46).

Ellen Winner argues that "in a text that is ironic throughout, the clues must be [...] [in] the conflict between what is said and what we know about the speaker's beliefs" (1997, 25). We might be tempted to suppose that Collodi ironically identifies Boccadoro as the "mouth of gold" because his golden lectures are polished, shiny, and civilised, but he is hypocritically the orthodox standard-bearer of conformist education who prevents Giannettino from being sentenced by the national law, putting personal advantage before the community's rules. Calling such a character *Boccadoro* hence seems ironic, a device through which Collodi underscores the hypocrisy of society by having a character affirm respectability and values but not practise them. As a popular proverb says – and most likely Collodi knew – "non è tutto oro quel che luccica" (All that glitters is not gold).

7. Ferrante, or the gratification of the self

Giannettino's uncle Ferrante has arguably the most positive representation of an adult male character in Collodi's schoolbooks. Collodi describes all of Ferrante's actions with positively connotated verbs; there is never a moment in which Ferrante yells or loses his patience, unlike Doctor Boccadoro. Even when Ferrante raises his voice, Collodi uses descriptors connoting positivity.

The educational model embodied by Ferrante seems to dissent from the dominant models of the time. Although his system of beliefs conforms to some extent to the bourgeois/Samuel Smiles-inspired positivist pragmatism – based on a solid faith in self-determination and willing obedience to community laws – he seems to distance himself from Positivism by accepting the impossibility of men to have absolute control over their lives, admitting the impact of *fortu-*

na. Also, he seems to promote a life comprising diverse experiences worldwide, which contravenes the dominant national propaganda based on unconditional love for the *patria*. Ferrante is the only character who encourages Giannettino to pursue individual self-realization, disregarding what the private (family) or public authorities (State) wanted for the child.

Giannettino perceives Ferrante as a role-model authority to imitate. The uncle is an experienced and famous sailor who travels the world and speaks many languages and is described as a vigorous man, with a burst of loud laughter and vast shoulders. Giannettino immensely admires and respects his uncle; throughout the whole Giannettino series, the young child always praises Ferrante in public, and Collodi's description seems to imply Giannettino's esteem for his uncle:

> Immaginatevi un bell'uomo sulla cinquantina, alto come un cipresso, con due spalle larghe quanto un pianerottolo di scale e uno stomaco che pareva un armadio aperto. Quando il Capitano rideva (e rideva spesso), le sue risate facevano un tal fracasso assordante, che somigliavano a quelle saette che si sentono sul palcoscenico nei balli e nelle opere in musica, allo scoppio del temporale. (1877, 33)

Ferrante's first appearance in the text shows his opposition to Boccadoro. Boccadoro had earlier in the story rewarded the child with a collection of marionettes, which he rapidly began to confiscate one by one because of Giannettino's inappropriate behaviour. Giannettino has to deal with a reduced number of marionettes, which puts his first marionette performance in front of family friends at risk of being cancelled. The child decides to transform the tyrant marionette into the primadonna Rosaura, but he does not modify the marionette's voice mechanism, which was pre-set as a deep, dark sound. During the show's emotive climax, the female marionette emits a deep, tyrant-like shout, which ignites the audience's hilarity. The noisiest laughter is Ferrante's, who then appears in the scene for the first time. Giannettino closes the curtains, interrupts the show, and reveals to Ferrante that his fiasco was caused by the sight of a white horse in the morning. This confession allows Ferrante to lecture the child against prejudices and superstitions such as salt dropped on the table, the number thirteen and the devil.

Ferrante's speech comes straight after Boccadoro's punishments. Such a strategy is very productive in showing the clear opposition between the two characters/educators; while Boccadoro uses prohibitions and punishments, Ferrante challenges stereotypes and superstitions. Boccadoro functions as the *pars destruens*, while the *pars construens*, Ferrante, encourages Giannettino to gain knowledge for self-determination in society and learn from direct experiences.

Ferrante is the only character who discusses Giannettino's future with him. He encourages him to learn other languages and the art of industry and trade and does not undermine career outcomes other than the ones that the child's family has already planned for him. Unlike Boccadoro, Ferrante embodies a positive (and positiv*ist*) message of self-determination and pragmatism. However, Collodi did not construct a character who is a mere reciter of positivist

mottos. Ferrante seems to have a more relaxed approach to life and admits that individual motivation cannot be the only factor, as luck and fortuity can also impact on one's choices. As a consequence, Collodi seems to deliver through Ferrante a message of self-satisfaction that differs from those focused on social or familial impositions:

> […] convengo anch'io che tutte le arti e tutte le professioni possono essere eccellenti, massime se esercitate con amore e con coscienza, e anco con un tantino di fortuna: perché nelle cose di questo mondo un po' di fortuna non guasta mai! Per conseguenza fa' pure, se così ti piace, o l'impiegato, o l'avvocato, il medico, o il pittore […]. (1877, 35)

Ferrante, for example, disagrees with Giannettino's mother, who wants her son to work in the public administration. In this volume, Ferrante challenges the bourgeois dogma of blindly following parents' wishes. Moreover, he warns Giannettino of the loss of personal freedom if he pursues a life as a public servant. Collodi uses his most positive character to critique working for the Italian State:

> Tutte a un modo queste benedette mamme – disse il Capitano ridendo, e guardando la sorella.– Basta che abbiano un figliuolo, non sono contente fino a tanto che non lo vedono appollaiato in qualche Uffizio o Azienda dello Stato. Non ti dirò che la strada degl'impieghi non possa condurre un galantuomo a guadagnarsi onestamente un pezzo di pane. Ma non credere, amico mio, che questa strada sia seminata di rose e di viole a ciocche! Il giorno che sarai impiegato, comincerai subito dal perdere i due più grandi beni della vita, cioè l'indipendenza e la libertà, e tutti i giorni avrai un orario fisso, come i treni delle strade ferrate. (*Ibidem*)

I argue that such promotion of an independent life is informed by Collodi's personal experiences and beliefs as well as a common mindset of the time: the triumph of the individual in the form of the "self-made-man". Collodi's nephew, known as Collodi Nipote, witnessed an argument between Collodi and his brother Paolo which he represented, incorporating that ideology of the self-made man. In this episode, Paolo was late for breakfast because of his work at the china manufactory owned by the aristocratic Ginori family. In the excerpt, Collodi emphasizes Paolo's skills, and how his brother Carlo should acknowledge that Ginori's profits rely on Paolo's hard work:

> Caro mio, dici bene tu, ma loro sono i miei padroni e mi tocca a fare il loro comodo." Carlo scattò: "Padroni un corno! Vuoi farti loro servitore umilissimo? E dov'è la tua dignità di uomo?" "Ma, Carlo, pensa a cosa hanno fatto i Ginori per noi." Lui battè stizzito il pugno sulla tavola, poi contenendosi: "Per noi?! Di me volevano fare un prete. Bel servizio, perdinci! […]" "Ne hanno il diritto […] sono dei nobili, e…" "E tu sei plebeo, non è vero? Tu, che sai fare tutto quello che loro non sanno, tu che con la tua intelligenza e il tuo lavoro dai loro i mezzi di fare […] Che se ne vadano al diavolo i tuoi padroni e tutta la nobiltà! (Lorenzini 1981, 52-53)

In Collodi's schoolbooks, I argue that Ferrante embodies the ironic approach of refusing unexamined truths. His lectures are always functional and pragmatic, while acknowledging life's unpredictability; his physical strength and gigantic appearance also contribute to a solidity and a stability connected neither with the State nor with the family. Ferrante found his happiness far from his family and his country, and he is the character that Collodi selects to be Giannettino's favourite – and potentially his readers'.

Overall, Collodi represented a dysfunctional family scenario that does not reflect the family's authoritarian portrayal as a foundation for the new Italian society. Collodi's families are corrupted, superficial, and uninterested in the life of the Italian community. The presence of lively characters such as Ferrante, however, proves that Collodi did not univocally criticize the bourgeoisie or other social classes. Collodi seems to offer, as his ideal paternal profile, a determined man who rejects ignorance and praises pragmatism but still gives great importance to culture and knowledge.

I now turn to another of these lively characters, Quintiliano, who is portrayed dramatically differently to Giannettino's father.

8. Quintiliano: the positive paternal model

Quintiliano is the father of Giannettino's friend, Minuzzolo. He is the only named upper-class father. Although the book *Minuzzolo* was not primarily intended as a schoolbook, Quintiliano stands out as the most positive paternal authority. Quintiliano is described as inflexible but fair, a positive role model for his four children: "un brav'uomo, che stando in commercio aveva fatto onestamente fior di quattrini" (Collodi 1878, 9). He is an idealized enlightened bourgeois destined to be part of the upper class that replaced the nobility as he buys a villa from a bankrupted aristocratic family at the beginning of the story. Quintiliano is not a man driven only to seek wealth or political power; instead, he seems to have a deep sense of tradition and culture. He is a classicist who admires Homer, Virgil, Catullus, and such modern classical poets as Ariosto, Mascheroni and Metastasio. Quintiliano seems to have a psychological sensibility that adds to his knowledge and erudition. For example, quizzing his children on history, he notices early that Adolfo, the laziest of his sons, could not answer his question. Hence, the father sends his children to bed and postpones the examination, preventing Adolfo's humiliation in front of his brothers.

Unlike the previous fathers I have described, Quintiliano spends much time with his children and ensures that they receive an education in respect, honesty, and culture. For example, he organises a weekly opening of his villa for the village farmworkers. During this event, his children and friends – all sons of farmers or servants – are taught Roman history through the explanation of the frescos on the villa's walls. This initiative allows farmworkers to finally understand those paintings they had been seeing for decades without comprehending them. Furthermore, Quintiliano publicly praises his servants' son, Sandrino for his clear historical exposition. His compliment was positively received by San-

drino's mother, who weeps as her son is praised in public by the master: "[…] la mamma di Sandrino, che era lì nella sala, sentendosi lodare in pubblico il figliuolo, e lodare da un uomo tanto stimato come il padrone, ebbe una specie di freddolino giù per le spalle, e presa una cocca del fazzoletto che portava in capo, si asciugò tutti e due gli occhi" (ivi, 54).

In line with the naming in Collodi's schoolbooks, the name Quintiliano reflects the character's qualities, in this case positive ones. Quintilian was a Roman educator of the 1st century who wrote the *Institutio oratoria*, a twelve-volume textbook on oratory and pedagogy. In this treatise, he aimed to re-institute the honest oratory of Cicero's times. He criticized the dishonest and corrupted oratory of his time (Piras, Luceri 2012, 211-323). In the character of Quintiliano, Collodi presents his ideal of the paternal role model, who values the education of future generations and a society in which different social classes can peacefully live together. He embodies Collodi's concept of the perfect father by balancing pragmatism, a business mind, a sense of family and a sincere love for culture and knowledge.

Collodi chose Giocondo's father in *La lanterna magica di Giannettino* to criticize the aristocratic class's arrogance and parasitism. I argue that the education of Giocondo by his parents is the sum of what Collodi believed to be toxic for the new Italian society: façade culture, parasitism, arrogance, and lack of interest in the national community. Giocondo admits that his family worships the noble Cairoli family, "la famiglia più gloriosa che abbia avuto l'Italia nel Risorgimento" (Collodi 1899 [1890], 182), demonstrating Collodi's scorn for pompous propaganda. Giocondo believes that his father's wealth exonerates him from social duties, as he states at the beginning of the book: "Che crede che abbia bisogno della grammatica e della geografia per essere un signore? La si figuri che il mi' babbo ha un bel palazzo con tanti poderi, e una stalla con due majalini, che ci fanno i salami e il prosciutto per tutto l'anno" (*ibidem*).

Giocondo's father is described as an aristocrat who does not want to contribute to the national community – although he uses free public schooling to educate his child. In this case, the father is a harmful member of the society, who also inculcates in his child values that conflict with those of the national community. Giocondo admits that this disrespect for working people and the new Italian society stems from his father: "l'arte di fare il signore oggi non è più permessa…una delle solite prepotenze del Ministero, come dice il mio babbo quando legge i giornali: ma essendo io nato di buona famiglia, come son nato, non mi rassegnerò mai e poi mai a fare il sarto o il calzolaio, o un altro mestiero purchessia, […] perché me ne vergognerei" (ivi, 82).

The respected authority attributed to the father figures in Collodi's schoolbooks hides many problematic aspects that, in Collodi's eyes, contributed to the formation of a dysfunctional society. Some upper-class father characters convey socially toxic messages such as indifference to the public community and financial parasitism. Collodi's choice of Giannettino's father as being an irresponsible parliamentary deputy denounces the bourgeoisie's defective familial and social educational approach. On the other hand, lower-class fathers are portrayed as

a social class whose only concern is hard work, with no time for their children's education and no hope of social mobility.

The character of a father who at least interacts with his children appears only in "I Nostri bambini". In this short story, a wealthy middle-class father wants to reprimand his vivacious son Beppino, who completely disrespects him. Beppino behaves like an undisciplined parliamentary deputy. He uses typical political expressions such as "All'ordine!" and imitates the Parliament's president when he calls the chamber to order by ringing the servant bell (Collodi 2006, 295-307). Beppino scorns his father by stealing his nightcap; ultimately, the father's humiliation reaches its climax in a scene reminiscent of the slapstick style of the *commedia dell'arte*. The mother, the sisters-in-law, the servant and even the dog attend the humiliation of the father: "i quali, appena udito il racconto dell'insolentissima scena, sono presi tutti da tale indignazione, che si mettono a ridere come tanti matti" (ivi, 299).

In the light of the Italian State's propagandistic aim to be perceived as the *padre* of its citizens, this short story "I Nostri bambini" can be interpreted as an allegory of the Italian nation, in which the deputies (the children) completely ignore the rules imparted by the father (the State) whose authority is insignificant. In this allegoric interpretation, Collodi undermines the paternal figure's authority and offers another satirical dysfunctional representation of the Italian family, which also symbolizes the national community. Collodi's fictional world does not celebrate any patriarchal figure; Collodi's families are fragmented and uneducated communities that are not organised by any familial structure.

As we have seen, Collodi's schoolbooks offer a dissenting portrayal of the family, which calls in question the dominant scholarly interpretation of his schoolbooks as supporting the élites. Collodi draws the young readers' attention to the values that their society propagandised as the backbone of the new nation, but refuses to imbue the figures of authority uncritically with those propagandistic values. Although Collodi does not deny the intrinsic value of the familial institution, the fictional families in his schoolbooks are majority dysfunctional communities. While contemporaneous authors tended to convey an idealized version of social and political realities such as family and State, Collodi created a narrative that was far from idealised or heroic. My analysis show that Collodi's ideological dissent is present in this satirical denunciation that he delivered to the new generation.

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